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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
601st MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
30 MAY 2016

PSC/PR/BR. (CDI)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 601st meeting held on 30 May 2016, received from the Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of the Central African States (ECCAS) a briefing on early warning and horizon scanning, as a follow-up to its Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(CCCLX) adopted at its 360th meeting, held on 22 March 2013, which called on the Commission to make full use of all instruments availed to it by the PSC Protocol in conflict prevention, notably by expeditiously bringing to the attention of the Council any matter which may threaten peace, security and stability in the continent.

Council recalled its previous decisions and pronouncements on early warning, particularly, Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM. (CDLXIII), adopted by Council at its 463rd meeting held on 27 October 2014, on structural conflict prevention, as well as the Conclusions of the PSC Retreat on the enhancement of Cooperation between the PSC and Regional Economic Communities/ Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) in the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa, held from 14 to 16 September 2015, in Abuja, Nigeria.

Council took note of the briefings provided by ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Commission, on early warning and horizon scanning, including updates on the state of operationalization and functioning of the early warning systems of ECOWAS and ECCAS.

Council commended the Commission, ECCAS and ECOWAS for the steps taken to enhance collaboration, information sharing and synergy between the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the Early Warning Systems of the RECs, with a view to enabling Council to take appropriate decisions in a timely manner. Council also commended the Commission for promoting an Inter-Departmental collaborative effort to provide Council with comprehensive and timeous early warning information.

Council acknowledged the persistent gap between early warning and early response and reaffirmed its commitment to ensure effective implementation of its decisions on conflict prevention, including the strengthening of the linkage between early warning and early response.

Council stressed the need to address the structural causes of violent conflicts in Africa, which could be linked to governance deficits. In this regard, Council requested the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) to brief Council on the status of implementation of the African Governance Architecture (AGA). In the same context, Council reiterated that building strong, responsive and accountable state institutions at the local and national levels that deliver essential services, as well as ensuring inclusive political processes and economic empowerment and opportunities, rule of law and public security, are key to preventing conflicts and in consolidating democracy and peace-building gains

Stressing that the primary responsibility for ensuring effective conflict prevention lies with the Member States, Council reiterated its appeal to those Member States that have not yet done so to expeditiously sign, ratify and domesticate the relevant AU instruments, particularly the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as the African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention).

Council noted with deep concern the existence of foreign military bases and establishment of new ones in some African countries, coupled with the inability of the Member States concerned to effectively monitor the movement of weapons to and from these foreign military bases. In this regard, Council stressed the need for Member States to be always circumspect whenever they enter into agreements that would lead to the establishment of foreign military bases in their countries.

Council also noted with deep concern that the continued illegal transfer of arms and ammunitions to non-state actors is a serious threat to peace and security in the continent and that support to early warning mechanisms as a means of conflict prevention will be undermined if this situation is not effectively addressed. Council recalled that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012, regulates the 'trade in small arms and light weapons' and it proscribes their transfer into the hands of 'illegal end users'. In this regard, Council underscored the need for the establishment of monitoring and accountability mechanisms for the illegal supply or transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-state actors in the African continent.

Council requested the Commission and the RECs/RMs to accelerate their efforts towards the full operationalization and strengthening of their early warning systems, and urged AU Member States to provide the necessary financial support to enhance the human resource and technical capacity to this effect.

Council commended the Commission for the provision of technical assistance to Member States in the establishment and operationalization of their national coordination centers encompassing national early warning and early response mechanisms. In the same context, Council encouraged those Member States, which have not yet done so, to also work with the Commission in establishing and further strengthening their own national early warning and conflict prevention capacities.

Council reiterated its request to the AU Commission, working with the RECs/RMs and the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), to provide regular early warning briefings to Council, at least twice every year.

Council agreed to remain seized on the matter.

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